

website **kick** start

7WEEKBOOK

7 ways to improve your website today
- tara gentile -

TwEak Number 1

Make your contact information easy to find – and in multiple places, please.

Check out your website. Is there a way to contact you? Is it easy to find? What if you'd never been to the site before? Would you know where to look or who you were dealing with?

Make sure there's a clear way to contact you throughout your website.

And don't be afraid to make your contact information as specific as possible. Let people know the best way to reach you and who they'll be dealing with. The fewer the questions, the better!

On the daily digital zine that I produce, Scoutie Girl, the contact page details who is receiving & reviewing emails, the type of submissions we accept, and multiple ways of reaching us:

<http://www.scoutiegirl.com/about/submissions>

At my main site, I wrap up my contact information on the About Page. That's a highly trafficked page and one place many people go to look for contact information. I also have ways of contacting me in the sidebar so you never have to leave the page you're on to get in touch!

<http://www.taragentile.com/about-2/>

Recap:

1. Put your contact information in MULTIPLE places.
2. Tell people WHO they're contacting.
3. Share the BEST way to contact you.
4. Explain WHY they would want to contact you.

What can you do today to spruce up your web presence with crucial contact information?

TwEak Number 2

What if you could reduce your email load AND generate one sales with one website tweak? You can:

Answer some frequently asked questions.

What questions do you find yourself answering over & over again in customer emails?

Write a list. Answer them. Post.

Your questions could be about your service, your product, your materials, your process, your story, your pricing, your views on whether iced lattes are better than hot lattes.

Anything. Answer the questions people are asking.

Answer the questions you WISH people asked.

Add a link to your FAQs page to your sidebar on your blog or your main site navigation. Add it to your product pages or your services page. You could add them to your Etsy shop announcement or policies section.

Customers really feel at ease and are more likely to buy when they know you've anticipated their needs.

Michelle, the When I Grow Up Coach, has a stellar FAQ page. Since her clients are probably brand new to personal coaching, her FAQs really help to make them feel comfortable with the process of getting to know her & what she does.

<http://whenigrowupcoach.com/faqs/>

Kerin Rose, a jewelry designer, has a great example of an FAQ page for a product-based business:

<http://kerinrose.com/faq/>

Recap:

1. Consider the questions that customers often email you about or ask you in person.
2. Write a list & answer them.
3. Post & link vigorously.

What questions will YOU answer today?

TwEak Number 3

Put a featured item front and center.

Got something you just wish everyone took a closer look at? Make sure it's the most prominent thing on your site.

Your “item” doesn't have to be a product for sale, either. It might be an email opt-in or a special promotion or even a big press mention. Don't wait for people to notice what you want them to see, take it into your own hands. Guide your customers through the experience of your website or shop.

Jan, of Daisy Janie, does this really well. Jan has a wide variety of products – but from the front page of her website you really only see one: her new wholesale collection. That's the one she wants you to notice. And notice you do.

<http://daisyjanie.com>

Heather, of The Mogul Mom, also does this really well. Instead of highlighting a specific product, Heather is calling attention to her mailing list sign up. She wants people to consume the content from her site in the most effective way possible - knowing that THAT is the most effective way to generate sales later on.

Also notice that Heather's feature has a clear call to action with a clear value proposition for the customer.

<http://www.themogulmom.com/>

Recap:

1. Decide what ONE product/service/action is most important to your business right now.
2. Highlight that product/service/action with featured placement on your site.

What do you want your customers to focus on in regards to your business?

TwEak Number 4

Feature a satisfied customer.

Surely, you've got a customer or two who has written you an email with a glowing review. First, write a quick note back to get their permission to use their testimonial. Then, add it to a prominent part of your site.

If you have multiple testimonials, slide them into your marketing copy wherever you can. Again, customers feel at ease when they know that others love your product.

Susannah Conway, photographer & creator of Unravelling, does this with a beautifully designed testimonials page. As a potential customer, you feel like you're on the cusp of joining a vibrant community of women.

<http://www.susannahconway.com/testimonials/>

You can also do this with a customer gallery, a blog post (or series!), or interview. Featuring your satisfied customers makes them feel special but it also underlines the value of your brand.

Recap:

1. Discover a testimonial from an email or tweet.
2. Feature it on a page, in your sidebar, or in a blog post.

How can you show off the way your products or services are used by your loyal customers?

Tweak Number 5

Tell visitors to take action.

Just as your featured item should be front & center, don't hesitate to let visitors know what you want them to do. Use strong language that focuses on the benefits to the customer.

“Enter your email address to receive exclusive promotions and news.”

“Click here to find out more about the necklace you'll love wearing to your holiday parties.”

Writing a strong call to action creates a sense of urgency and keeps visitors from getting lost on your site.

In an attempt to not sound like a used car salesman, many business owners are overly "polite" when asking site visitor's to

take action. Be direct. Your visitors are being constantly bombarded with messages & request. Only the most direct, clear, and concise make it through the filter.

Megan is doing a great job with this right now! "Find your perfect necklace." Don't mind if I do! *Click!*

<http://www.meganauman.com/>

Recap:

1. Identify places on your site where you want visitors to take action.
2. Edit the copy (wording) to be a clear & concise action statement. Start with a verb whenever possible.
4. Communicate the value of the action to the visitor in the action statement.

What action would you like your visitors to take? How will you direct them to take that action?

Tweak Number 6

Put some personality on the page.

If you haven't updated your website in a while, there's a good chance you have some "professional speak" on your page. Loosen up. Let your personality shine. Odds are, your customers will love you just as much as they love your stuff. And their relationship with you is what keeps them coming back for more!

Make sure your copy sends a message that you're a serious business but that you're a real person too.

My friend Kelly does this best of all. Now she's a professional writer – but you don't have to be a pro to get personal on your site. Check out the way she turns a phrase & incorporates her unique style throughout her header, sidebar, and footer.

<http://kellydiels.com>

And check out Kelly's Sunday School for Sentences series for some series writing help:

<http://www.kellydiels.com/category/sunday-school-for-sentences/>

(fair warning: Kelly's posts are not for the faint of heart)

Not to be outdone, my friend Alex is also an amazing wordsmith. She has several resources for helping you get in touch with your personality & put it into words:

Grab her Pre-Velocity Playbook:

<http://www.alexandrafranzen.com/velocity/>

Create a manifesto from her cheat sheet:

<http://unicornsforsocialism.com/2011/01/01/2011-high-voltage-vision/>

Recap:

1. Identify stale copy on your website. It lurks where you least expect it.
2. Jam & riff on new ideas for promotional prose.
3. Get in touch with your vision and reveal it with words.

How can you communicate your passion with personality?

Tweak Number 7

Clean it up.

As website trends change – more quickly than my hair styles – we tend to add a lot of junk to our websites. Icons for this, badges for that. Links to friends and pictures of cats.

Even on the web, less is more. Check out your website and see what's really important and what is just clutter. Remove the clutter and find a much better website underneath!

I just cleaned up the sidebar at Scoutie Girl. I removed four+ items that just weren't relevant to the business model at that site anymore.

Steven King tells a story about the first newspaper article he ever wrote. It was full of descriptive prose, metaphors, and details. His editor cut all the "extra" words out.

The editor said, "When you write a story, you're telling yourself the story. When you rewrite, your main job is taking out all the things that are NOT the story."

Take out all the things that are NOT your business, your brand, your site.

What could you REMOVE from your site to make it convert more sales, clearly communicate your brand image, or allow visitors to discover more about you?

want to get taken seriously?

8 must-have online business elements to take you to the next level

You can start a business with absolutely no money. You can start making money before you invest a cent in platform, design, or technology.

If you got the itch, you could start a business – right now – by setting up a free blog, emailing 10 friends, or announcing on Facebook that you're for hire... all whilst leaving your credit card in the other room. The barrier to starting a business has *never* been lower.

This is well documented. And... at this point... boring. Starting a business for free is great. But starting is just one step – albeit an important one – on the way to truly leveraging your time, energy, and expertise into a world-changing, money-making venture.

You simply can't afford to stay in the beginner stage of business very long.

It's not good for morale or for your bank account. But where to go? What to do?

Take a look at the businesses that are where you'd like to be. No need to look at multi-million dollar corporations, take stock of other solopreneurs and passion-driven business owners. How does your business stack up? Do you look like a beginner? Do you sound like someone "faking it til she makes it?" These are difficult questions to pose to yourself, let alone answer.

People are making judgement calls about your business every day. And it affects where their money goes when it's time to make a purchase.

While there are many levels of this question to consider, here's some direction on what your business *needs* in order to be taken seriously **online**. Again, you don't need all these items in place to begin hocking your wares or offering your services but you should be checking more & more items off this list the longer you are in business.

To give you an idea of what to budget, I've included approximate costs for each item on the list!

1. **Website at a domain name that's all your own.** This small cost makes a huge difference in how others perceive your business. You can still run a free platform and trick it out with a domain or you can invest in [web hosting](#) and build a more professional site using WordPress. *\$10 per year for domain, \$90 per year for web hosting.*

2. **Email address at your own domain name.** For the love of money, stop using that AOL address and take 10 minutes to create your own email address! There are plenty of services that allow you to do this *without* web hosting but, since you really should have web hosting anyhow, take a break from Twitter today to figure out how to set up your own email account through your provider. Hint: my email addresses all forward to my Gmail account – where you can also send from private email – so I can maintain my easy peasy email integration. *Free with web hosting.*

3. **Website that is custom looking.** No really, custom *looking* is fine. You can achieve this with a little help from limited edition graphics, like a header from [By Reese](#), and a WordPress theme like [Headway](#) or [StudioPress](#) that don't require code skills to customize them. *\$90-500 depending on needs.*

[Michelle](#) nails this one (via [Google+](#)):

The design doesn't have to make me go "Oh wow, who designed this website?!" but, if I land on the page and my first thought is "Ouch, they shouldn't have done this themselves," then there's a problem.

4. **Great photo of you.** This is one I fought for a long time. When I finally put up a pro head shot on my website, I really felt like I was being taken more seriously – and that was *after* my first 6-figure year. It's really, really worth it. Don't forget to put your full name – unless you have some good reason to have a business under an alias – under that pretty pic! Don't laugh: I have a *hard* time figuring out who some business owners really are. *\$175 for a session with a pro photographer. Check with photography students for a discounted rate.*

5. **Nothing on your website that you didn't deliberately put there.** Several website platforms include ads – either for themselves or others – or other text that have nothing to do with your business. Often times, you can get rid of them by paying a small fee. If you love that platform, it's well worth the small expense. *\$15 per year.*

6. **Smart email signature.** I get a lot of business question emails from people with no email signatures! Don't miss this crucial marketing opportunity – include your website, a brief explanation of what you do, and another spot to connect with you. Any more than that and it starts to get annoying – any less than that and you're wasting your time. *Free!*

7. **Well-written copy.** Let's face it: we're not all great writers. And even good writers need help with their website copy. This isn't just avoiding typos or bad grammar – it's about clearly communicating who you are, what you do, and how you do it. With style. *\$250 per page.*

8. **Elegant way to handle payments.** There are lots of ways to jimmy your payment gateway & invoicing. Sadly, when you choose to jimmy instead of choosing elegance, your business doesn't look as serious or trust-worthy. The easiest & cheapest way to improve your checkout process is with [e-Junkie](#). Use it with a digital product to guarantee immediate downloads. Use it with a service to provide extra instruction via URL redirect. Or go to the next level and try out a service like [1shoppingcart](#). \$5-100 *per month*.

This is not a comprehensive list. These are the items that most often catch my eye as disappointing mistakes in businesses that are struggling for attention and trying desperately to get ahead. If you're wondering where to invest your time & money now that you've been at this for a bit, these are the things that *need* to get taken care of as soon as possible. If you're only getting started, don't let this list hold you back but keep it in mind when you're making decisions.

Are you ready for a website you're proud of?

You want a website that "speaks to your customers." You want a site that gives them the information they need in a style that suits you. You want to create a community and tell your story.

Website Kick Start teaches you to create a custom website perfect for launching your business, ecourse, or online community. No more "how'd they do that?" No more "I wish I had a site that told my story..."

Website Kick Start will empower you to create an intimate interface between you and those who need what you have to offer.

But building a website is difficult, right? And expensive? And time consuming?

Well, it can be. I have a lot of clients that have built difficult, expensive, time consuming websites. And they look great! **But I also know that building a functional, great looking website doesn't have to be that way.**

Website Kick Start is my not-so-crash course in creating a website you're proud of, that serves your business, and tells your story.





Tara Gentile | taragentile.com

I push passion-driven entrepreneurs to actualize their ideas, visions, and dreams – turning them into dollars and cents.

I ruthlessly rethink assumptions. I ask the questions you were hoping I wouldn't. I pose the challenges you weren't expecting. I suggest the impossible and show you how it's done. My ideal world is one where people think for themselves, where face value has the least value, where careful thought & consideration is money in the bank.

You've been told you can do whatever you want when you grow up. You've also been told you need to be an adult, pay the bills. For most, these statements have been mutually exclusive. I thought they were too: "It's okay if you don't make a lot of money, you'll be doing what you love..." I want you to know this is a lie. You can do what you love, serve the world, create your art, make magic, AND get paid well.

Your dreams have financial worth. **I'll prove it.**

I rediscovered my own dream after I became a stay at home mom. Writing, teaching, philosophizing – I wanted to do it all. And I did. It took time, experimentation, practice, and a heap of ambition but I grew a few bucks a month into a few thousand and a few thousand a month into a 6-figure business. My epiphany was not some secret-of-the-internet was to make money fast. My come-to-god moment was realizing how much money I was leaving on the table doing the work I was doing. My soul couldn't charge that much money for the work, not because it wasn't worth it, but because my work wasn't that of my soul.

It's not enough to simply create a product, dream up a service, or make an offer. Your work must be aligned with your very core to realize its financial potential. As I continue to align my work with my core spirit, I continue to grow my business, becoming free & financially independent.

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